

SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

Background

In 1995, the State and regional boards developed a Strategic Plan to provide organization-wide directions and priorities. A key element of the Strategic Plan is the Watershed Management Initiative, the primary premise of which is that Board actions and decisions should be guided by consideration of water quality related impacts within the context of a watershed. The Watershed Management Initiative, when fully implemented, will integrate watershed planning, nonpoint source management, monitoring, permit writing, compliance and enforcement, groundwater protection and other programs to promote efficient use of personnel and fiscal resources while ensuring maximum water quality protection benefits.

In 1996, the State Board, regional boards and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency prepared a *Watershed Management Initiative Plan* to implement the Watershed Management Initiative. The Plan is updated on an annual basis. Each Regional Board has prepared a chapter for the Plan and this document is the 2002 update of the chapter for the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. A key purpose of the chapter is to provide a description of how existing resources are allocated to address water quality problems and, where existing resources are inadequate, to provide support for obtaining additional resources.

Watershed Approach Overview

The Central Valley Regional Board's general watershed management approach applies regionwide and includes both groundwater and surface water. The watershed management approach focuses on identifying problems and solutions for each waterbody. It takes advantage of the resources in the area. This differs from a programmatic approach which focuses on applying standards equitably to all discharges of a certain type.

Although there is some consensus that a watershed approach provides the greatest opportunity for accelerated benefits from limited funds, resources continue to be provided on a programmatic basis with requirements that make it difficult to organize the funds by watershed. An additional difficulty in the Central Valley is the sheer size of the region. The large number of watersheds, each with a wide variety of ongoing activities, makes it difficult to focus on a few for the length of time to demonstrate a benefit to a watershed approach.

Much of the work of the Board continues to be carried out in a programmatic manner. This work will be discussed in the Regionwide section. Where appropriate, the individual watershed sections will describe how the programmatic work can be integrated with ongoing watershed activities.

The process used in a watershed approach includes assessing water quality problems in each watershed, developing and implementing strategies to prevent or correct problems, and

evaluating success. All the activities to address water quality issues described in the *State of the Watershed Reports* in Section 3 of this Chapter fall somewhere on this continuum.

The Regional Board approach is a product of the vast area that must be addressed and past activities in the Region. Historically, the Regional Board and other agencies have focused limited resources on the large, important water bodies and water bodies that have the most obvious impairments. The result is that much is known about, and much activity is associated with water quality problems in the Delta, lower Sacramento River, lower San Joaquin River, and a few other water bodies that are located near significant pollutant sources (i.e., Iron Mountain Mine, Penn Mine, Sulfur Bank Mine, and Walker Mine). However, there have never been sufficient resources to fully address even these water bodies. Many of the tributaries to the mainstem rivers, the streams upstream from the major reservoirs, and most of the lakes have received little attention. Assessment of area wide ground water problems has been limited and there are no programs to comprehensively address the significant problems.

Improvements in water quality have largely been made by addressing problems associated with point source discharges. For the last 30 years, the Regional Board has expended significant resources on the point source program. However, continued and expanded efforts in compliance monitoring, permit renewals, and enforcement are still needed to assure that point source problems remain controlled or are eliminated. In contrast to past efforts, the 1996 Water Quality Assessment Report shows that nonpoint sources are now the major cause of water pollution in the Central Valley Region. Most of the surface water bodies that are listed as impaired on the 1998 Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list are impaired due to nonpoint source discharges. Moreover, the most widespread ground water problems are also the result of nonpoint source discharges.

Overall Goals and Objectives

The overall goals and objectives for the Central Valley Regional Board's Watershed Management Initiative Chapter are to:

- 1) Describe how the Regional Board implements point and nonpoint source programs in a manner that compliments the activities and goals of other stakeholders in order to focus on priority watersheds, achieve water quality improvement, and promote restoration of water resources;
- 2) Present the recent, current, and future activities of staff to protect water quality;
- 3) Provide the rationale for staff priorities;
- 4) Promote voluntary watershed stewardship efforts;
- 5) Present a coordinated, comprehensive regional planning process to protect water quality; and
- 6) Present the results of assessment activities in the "State of the Watershed" reports.

Watershed Strategy

The Regional Board strategy is to focus on priorities based on: (1) legislative mandates, (2) water quality assessments and water body lists prepared in fulfillment of Federal Clean Water Act reporting requirements, (3) triennial Basin Plan reviews which include public participation and comment, (4) previous watershed management activities, and (5) dedicated funding for the issue. The following are the Regional Board's priorities for the next several years.

- Continue the current level of regulatory activities in the Region.
- Develop and implement Total Maximum Daily Load Allocations as resources allow. (Current resources of approximately 13 PYs will allow us to work on TMDLs for selenium, boron and salinity in the San Joaquin River, metals in the Sacramento River, OP pesticides in the Sacramento and the San Joaquin rivers and the Delta, dissolved oxygen in the San Joaquin River and mercury in the Clear Creek watershed and the Delta.)
- Continue the current level of nonregulatory activities in the Region.
- Provide basin planning support for the review of beneficial uses, water quality objectives and implementation programs in unique situations such as ephemeral and agriculture and domestic wastewater dominated waterbodies.
- Develop and implement ambient monitoring and assessment programs to identify and/or confirm water quality impairments to surface waters and to assess the effectiveness of implementation programs in protecting groundwater.

Organization of the Chapter

The chapter contains five sections and accompanying appendices.

Executive Summary, contains a description of the Central Valley Region, identifies key watersheds, describes the Region's basic strategy to implement the WMI, describes key regional water quality problems and presents a brief description on resources to address these problems.

Section 1, Introduction, includes a description of the Regional Board's general watershed management approach and explains how the sections of the chapter fit together to implement this strategy.

Section 2, Regionwide Activities, consists of activities organized on a regionwide, programmatic basis. This section focuses on the point source programs that are defined in a programmatic manner rather than a watershed manner. These programs include septic tank/onsite disposal, Non-Chapter 15, basin planning, water quality monitoring, nonpoint source management, dredging, water quality certification, dairy regulation, storm water regulation, NPDES regulation, and Chapter 15 (oilfields).

Section 3, Watershed Activities, contains *State of the Watershed Reports* for the three major watersheds in the Region (Sacramento River, San Joaquin River and Tulare Lake Basin) and for sub-watersheds in which there is focused staff activity (Pit River, North and Middle Forks of the Feather River, Cache Creek, and the Delta). Each State of the Watershed Report contains two main parts 1) *Watershed Description*; 2) *Strategies and Activities, and Resource Needs*, which describe the water quality problems and issues in the watersheds and the activities and strategies to address them including a description of priorities and resource information. There is also identification in general terms, of where additional resources are needed to fully address a water quality issue. This includes both staff resources and monitoring needs. Section 3, the State of the Watershed Reports, focuses on nonpoint source problems and programs because these programs are more amenable to a watershed approach.

The **Appendix** contains three parts: Appendix 1 the list of projects to be conducted by stakeholder groups that the Regional Board will support for grant funding. Appendix 2 describes the ongoing activities and goals of the nonpoint source program. Appendix 3 contains details of monitoring and assessment programs currently in place and anticipated in the future.